

University of Utah
Rocky Mountain Center for Occupational and Environmental Health
Annual Program Highlights
Reporting Period: July 1, 2012 – June 30, 2013
Principle Investigator: Kurt Hegmann, MD, MPH

Center Highlights

Administration

Program Director: Kurt Hegmann, MD, MPH

RMCOEH Center Renewed

The RMCOEH received a full 5-years of approval for funding from the NIOSH review panel. This approval will run from 2013-2018.

Certificate in Occupational Safety and Health

The Board of Regents of the State of Utah approved the RMCOEH's application for a Certificate in Occupational Safety and Health program. This certificate program will complement the RMCOEH's other degree programs by offering an entry route for those already practicing OSH in the field

Continuing Education (CE)

Program Director: Connie Crandall

A significant impact of the Rocky Mountain Center for Occupational and Environmental Health (RMCOEH) Continuing Education (CE) Program is the increase in numbers of individuals trained. At the end of the 2007-2013 grant period, there was a 21% overall increase in participants over the previous 5-year grant period. This was attributable to a number of increased course offerings, including contract courses.

Another significant impact of the CE Program in the 2007-2013 grant period is in the establishment of training partnerships to increase course offerings and enhance regional coverage. Partnerships have been established with educational institutions in St. George, UT (Dixie Applied Technology College), North Dakota (North Dakota Safety Council) and Helena, MT (University of Montana) to work collaboratively on offering both safety and hazardous substances courses.

Finally, the CE Program has routinely offered professional credits to its programs as a benefit to course participants in meeting professional association maintenance requirements. During the 2007-2013, the CE program has expanded this benefit to include State Occupational Licensing credits for those occupations requiring evidence of continuing education to meet state licensing requirements.

Industrial Hygiene

Program Director: Rod Larson

Ph.D. in Occupational and Environmental Health (OEH): As of August of this year, there are two students in the new Ph.D. program with emphasis in Industrial Hygiene. One student began in January, 2013 and his research project is related to evaluating existing methods and developing improved methods as may be applicable for accurate monitoring of nanoparticles. The other Ph.D. student just started in the program this semester but is considering research to determine if there is an association between specific health effects (e.g., autism) and low-concentration air contaminants in the Salt Lake Valley area.

Development of improved methods for monitoring aerosols in low air velocity environments: Dr. Darrah Sleeth has received a K-01 career development award to evaluate methods for measuring aerosols that are more biologically relevant, i.e., particles that deposit in the human body versus those that merely penetrate into the respiratory tract. She now has a specially designed low speed wind tunnel constructed and operational on the U of Utah campus and has begun her research in this area. In addition, Dr. Sleeth is a co-PI on an R-01 funded research project to develop a disposable inhalable aerosol sampler.

RMCOEH IH students received a record number of scholarships from American Industrial Hygiene Foundation (AIHF) in 2003:

RMCOEH Students seeking the Master of Science in Occupational Health (MSOH) degree with an emphasis in Industrial Hygiene were very successful this year in receiving scholarship awards for the American Industrial Hygiene Foundation. Five of the MSOH students received a total of eight (8) scholarship awards from AIHF.

Occupational Medicine Program Director: Eric Wood

Healthcare and Prevention in Miners: As part of the developing interdisciplinary focus at RMCOEH on Occupational Health and Safety in Mining, the Occupational Medicine program initiated a clinical care and resident training track for healthcare and prevention in Miners. RMCOEH OM faculty began staffing the Utah Miners Hospital and Clinic in Orem, Utah in November 2012. The Utah Miners Hospital was funded through a state of Utah legislative endowment to evaluate and treat mining related health conditions among Utah's coal, metal, and non-metal miners. Faculty are developing the clinic to train residents in the evaluation and management of health conditions related to mining injuries and illnesses of Utah miners. Residents will learn screening protocol for the Federal Black Lung program and other mining related health conditions. OM Faculty also provided staffing at the Rio Tinto and Utah Kennecott Copper Mine clinic during the period.

Occupational Medicine Clinical Operations: The OM program continues to expand clinical operations through the two University of Utah Occupational Medicine Clinics at Redwood Health Center in Salt Lake City, UT, and the South Jordan Health Center in South Jordan, UT. An expanded program for annual surveillance & screening and ongoing management of injury and illnesses among firefighters and police officers was developed during the period. This clinical expansion provides residents significant opportunities to develop skills in this high-risk population of workers. OM Residents work directly with OMR faculty to provide patient care, and to form and implement preventive health and wellness services for these workers and other working populations and community members. A key component of this program is to develop health and wellness services for underserved populations.

Hill Air Force Base (HAFB) Health, Wellness and Clinical Prevention: The OMR developed a rotation with long-term collaborators at Hill Air Force Base to train residents in clinical prevention and workplace health and wellness for civilian employees and their families at HAFB (n~20,000). Residents train under the guidance of Adjunct Clinical Assistant Professor & RAC member Christopher Kleinsmith, DO, MPH, Chief of Occupational Medicine at HAFB with OMR faculty support. Residents have experiences at the HAFB Health and Wellness Center, and the Civilian Health Promotions Services working with a team of health promotion specialists, exercise physiologists, and dietitians. Residents also assist with analysis of outcome data on program effectiveness, and development of strategies for program modification.

Opioid-related Deaths: RMCOEH faculty lead by Dr. Melissa Cheng reported results of a population-based study of opioid-related deaths in the state of Utah (REF Am J Ind Med 2013;56:308-316). Among the findings

included are that 57% of deaths had a prior worker's compensation claim. Risk factors for opioid-related death included lack of a high school diploma, mental illnesses, tobacco use, alcohol use and illicit drug use. These results suggest the worker's compensation system likely has an opportunity(ies) to reduce this societal burden.